

THE SURREY INVESTIGATION GROUP ON AERIAL PHENOMENA  
(S.I.G.A.P.)

Newsletter No. 9      February 9, 1968.

• The Surrey Investigation Group on Aerial Phenomena  
• is affiliated to the British Unidentified Flying  
• Object Research Association and their united aims  
• are to promote unbiased investigation and research  
• into the "Unidentified Flying Object Phenomena".

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+   UFOs over Tobruk   +
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UFOs have reputation for popping up virtually anywhere at any time. Although our group is primarily concerned with the investigation of Surrey UFO reports we are, nevertheless, also interested in sightings from all over the world. Quite often people send us details of mysterious aerial objects which have been seen by friends or relatives in other parts of the country, and occasionally overseas. One such sighting which came to light recently concerned a globular object which hovered over Tobruk, Libya, during the second world war.

It was seen by Mr. D. Butcher, of "The Ridge", Green Lane, Ash Green, Aldershot, now a S.I.G.A.P. member. At the time he was a sapper in the 54th Field Company, Royal Engineers. At about 10 a.m. on what Mr. Butcher thinks was December 11, 1941, he and other sappers of the same Company were driving into Airedale, some two miles from Tobruk, when they saw five soldiers gazing into the planeless sky. Here is Mr. Butcher's account of the sighting:-

"As we drew closer we recognised them as men of the garrison, who had considerable experience in aircraft recognition. On being asked what they were looking at, one of them invited us to sight along the cliff-like face of a great cumulus cloud which towered almost vertically above our heads. I did so - but could see nothing. Not until a pair of field glasses were passed to me, and I had sighted along my informant's pointing finger, could I locate the "thing". After that I was able to see it quite easily with the naked eye. What I saw was a silvery globe. By naked eye it appeared somewhat larger than the planet Venus as seen under desert conditions. That is to say, it was large enough for me to distinguish it from Venus. It reflected the sunlight and as I watched it floating like a pearl in space it struck me at once as something alien, remote and fairy-like. We all had the impression that it was observing. It was nothing that we could put a name to. Our guess was that it was between 30,000 and 50,000 feet up. The man who first saw the object said that there had been two other globes which had moved off towards the south-east. We observed the object for some time - about half an hour - and it never moved from its position, which was at about 85° above the south-east horizon. We discussed its identity. I, at first sight, had jumped to the conclusion that it was a parachute, but closer scrutiny soon ruled this out. It was plainly a globe. All agreed on that. Most of us thought that it might be a meteorological balloon, although just why there should have been three together at one time, and why two should take off from the other, we could not explain. The object seemed too big to be Venus and it wasn't all that far above the clouds. I knew that certain desert-dwellers were reputed to be able to see Venus in daylight with the naked eye, but doubted my own capacity to do likewise. I was sceptical about any of us being able to distinguish the planet in the glare of a desert sky near noon. It looked more like a balloon than a planet.



"Tired of waiting for it to show some sign of mobility, we took leave of our sky-watching acquaintances and journeyed on to our camp half a mile away. There we pointed out the mysterious globe to the rest of our unit and to the others - about 50 men in all. Most visitors to the camp were shown it. Assuming that the original discoverers of the object had also shown it to their own units, hundreds of the Tobruk garrison must have seen it. All day long it hung there, confounding the adherents of Venus by its stubborn immobility, and testing the credulity of the meteorological-ballooner by the same token. Only those who opined that it might be some sort of secret weapon left there by the high flying Italian Savoias gained a few converts: they waited for it to strike. Eventually all of us grew weary of speculating about it. It was there - a mystery - and that was all there was to be said. We went about our duties and only occasionally glanced up to the zenith to see if it was still there. Imagination dried up. We had accepted it. Only towards the end of the afternoon did I realise that it had declined a little to the south-east - say about seven to ten degrees. At dusk it was shining like a star, more golden in colour than it had been in daylight. I did not see the going of it. I was asleep. Next morning we searched for it, but without success.

"My sighting may be compared with that at Ouellan in the French Sahara some five months later, in April 1942. Both were witnessed in North Africa, both were long term sightings, and both involved a similar object, a globe. The Ouellan sighting seems to have been particularly well attested and observed".

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+   Choir boys see lights in   +
+       sky over Sutton        +
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A squadron of UFOs paid a visit to Sutton last November. They were on a zig-zag course and said to have flown from the south and disappeared in the direction of Morden. The objects were seen by three choir boys at St. Nicholas' Church and the director of music at the church. They made the sighting on November 12 at about 8 p.m., just after the evening service. One of the choir boys, 12 year old Timothy Jackson, of 45 Cheam Road, Sutton, who is a pupil at Sutton Grammar School, said that they saw the objects just after leaving the church. It was a clear night with a bright moon. The witnesses saw a number of lights in the sky. Timothy described one of the lights as brighter than a star and said it began to move across the sky in a north-west direction. "The light seemed to zig-zag from left to right for about three minutes. At first we thought it was a shooting star, but it went on too long". Timothy said that he was also sure that the light was not a plane because of its manoeuvres and its speed. After sighting the object in the sky Timothy and his two friends, head chorister Geoffrey Davis, of 60 Upper Vernon Road, who goes to Glastonbury School, and Steven Prince, of 5 Brandon Road, who attends Sutton West, went to the police station to report what they had seen. The music director at St. Nicholas Church, Mr. David Squibb, of 9 Banstead Road South, verified the boys' account. Mr. Squibb, who is also director of music at Trinity School, Croydon, said the light zig-zagged for about five minutes. At first he thought it was a shooting star then, when it persisted, he thought it might have been a meteorological balloon reflecting the light of the moon.



But as he said: "I've never seen a balloon move about like that". He was sure the light did not come from a plane. "It was a clear moonlight night and we would have seen the outline of a plane and its green and red navigation lights as well". The light was white and bright. "I just don't know what it was. But something was there", said Mr. Squibb.

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+ UFOs or mirage? +  
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Another November sighting has also come to light. Retired engineer Mr. E.C. Steele (77), of 36 Vogan Close, Reigate, saw what appeared to be a rift in the sky at 8 p.m. on November 4. In the rift were five very bright horizontal lights. Said Mr. Steele: "The spaces between the lights were about twice the diameters of the lights themselves. They were shimmering as in heated air. The outline of the surrounding space was indistinct but the lights were quite clear". When observed through binoculars the lights appeared larger, but no more distinct. Mr. Steele suggested later that the "phenomena" he saw may have been a kind of "mirage from a row of street lights in a layer of heated air". This would explain the shimmering effect.

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+ The satellite that never was +  
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"A green ball of fire" seen by Epsom architect Mr. Roy Mortlock as he left his office on January 10, was the Russian satellite Cosmos 197 re-entering the earth's atmosphere - according to the Ministry of Defence. However, the Space Department of the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, says that this particular satellite is still spinning happily around the world! Mr. Mortlock said: "I was a passenger in a car leaving the office driveway, when I saw it. It appeared to be travelling towards Epsom Downs. I was prepared to forget about it, but the next day I heard in the office that others had seen it, and the police were called in. I then thought it was a meteorite or satellite".

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+ S.I.G.A.P. Officers +  
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- Omar Fowler.



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+ Notes from the Secretary +  
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I have recently had correspondence with the Isle of Wight UFO Investigation Society, the publishers of UFOLOG and until last year the producers of SPACELINK, which many of you will have read. UFOLOG is a monthly bulletin giving details of all known UFO sightings which have been probed by groups throughout the country. This is of course very useful information and S.I.G.A.P. is subscribing to it.

Someone somewhere has my "Guide to UFOs", a booklet by Lloyd Mallan and published in America by Science and Mechanics. Please can they return it! (195 Epsom Road, Guildford).

- Dick Beet.

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+ Editor's Comments +  
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Finding enough material each month for the newsletter is a formidable task, as Omar Fowler will tell you. Yet the job would be made much easier and the newsletter more interesting if members sent in letters and articles. Things I should like are as follows:

1. Ideas for S.I.G.A.P. projects.
2. General letters.
3. Features on ufology and related topics.
4. Interesting extracts from UFO books and magazines.
5. Personal pieces - how I became a UFO believer.

Any copy for publication should be sent to my home address, given on the previous page.

Eventually, when S.I.G.A.P. has more funds available, it may be possible for us to have a proper magazine. But a lot depends on you.

- Ron Toft.

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+ Another Surrey UFO Group! +  
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S.I.G.A.P. has been contacted by The Society For The Investigation of Unidentified Flying Object Phenomena, based at Tolworth, Surrey. We hope to exchange UFO data and co-operate on sighting reports. The Chairman is Mr. I. Mackinlay and the Secretary Mr. P. Jones.

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